



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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you disobedient, that you want to paint, and not to go to the nursery; tell them you are busy and have not time to let them dance."

To my delight the smiles beamed out. Instantly the habit of obedience reasserted itself. She too had something to conquer. The little feet were caught in her hands, and she bent down to them.

"Keep still Minnie's toeties, Minnie's busy, got no time for you to dance, you shall dance presently."

The battle was won! Soon she said, "you won't want the bell, my toeties are good."

To mark the event the "toeties" were allowed a piece of newspaper to "stand on," and when several times that morning and on following mornings they began to kick with excitement again, they were admonished with raised hand, "Be still Minnie's toeties, me very busy. Mother says you not to dance," and all is peace. The piece of paper for them to "stand on" is given to them every day "by request," and I never have to interfere.

This little maid has been brought up from the first on "obedience lessons." There have been a few critical occasions when, in spite of them, prompt punishment had to follow disobedience, but those outbreaks I think, were the fruits of some spoiling by an injudicious nurse. Honestly I may say that though she is one of the friskiest little chatterboxes going, the difficulty about "obedience" does not exist. Of course her memory does not serve always: she has to be reminded very often that such and such things are, so to speak, "out of bounds" for her,—of course I am careful not to wait for an occasion, but to take frequent occasion to say "little girls must not touch father's books, only their own books," or "little girls must not touch flowers in the jars: mother gives her some when she can," and so on, and I never have any trouble at all, nor, now the injudicious nurse is gone, does anyone else in the house. We need waste no vital energy here. All has gone so easily all along, that though she has strong will, and is very vigorous and lively, I am more and more convinced that if obedience is taught from the first dawns of understanding,—the child having no bad habits to overcome,—it may be effectively taught with remarkably little difficulty.

LESSONS FROM DARWIN.

BY JANET M. HAYCRAFT.

I. EARTHWORMS.

THOSE of my readers who have visited the wonderful Natural History Museum at South Kensington, will perhaps remember the statue of Charles Darwin, which is placed at the top of the first flight of steps. There he sits, and seems to preside over the whole marvellous collection of animals, birds, and insects; and rightly so, for no man has ever done more for the progress of Science, which, as you know, means the right understanding of the beautiful world of nature in the midst of which we live.

Darwin wrote a great many wise and learned books, and one of the most pleasant things about these books is, that they contain a great deal which is of intense interest to children as well as to grown up people. I often think that if little folks knew more about the ways of Nature and her children, sometimes even the most enchanting fairy stories would be thought less interesting than the real histories of animals, birds, and insects.

Let us now begin to think about some of the wonderful stories we can read of in Darwin's books, and first of all we will take the earthworms.

I daresay you give a little shudder and say, "What horrid little creatures to think about, how can they be interesting;" but wait a moment and let us see. I am always sorry for the children who, though perhaps, they have gardens of their very own, yet never give a thought to the worms which dwell in the mould, except to wish they were away, instead of always popping up unexpectedly whenever a spadeful of earth is turned up, as they so often do.

What will you say when I tell you, that without the earth-worm your gardens could not be what they are—good places

for growing plants and flowers. You know that plants are constantly sucking up, not only moisture from the earth, but all sorts of tiny particles of matter, which help them to live just as your food helps you. As this sucking-in is constantly going on, the mould would by and bye become exhausted and unable to give the necessary nourishment to roots and leaves and flowers. We see that gardeners and farmers understand this, because they dig and plough the soil, so as to bring fresh quantities of mould to the top; but long before farmers and gardeners did this, the earthworms were busy at work doing the very same thing, and still they do it, and without their help, farmers and gardeners would be very badly off indeed.

And now you will be asking "How" and "Why," very useful questions to bring to every new piece of knowledge which comes across your way. If we can, let us go out some evening after dark, with a lantern or a candle, say at the end of autumn, after some good showers of rain which will have moistened the earth, and what may we see or hear? Let us stoop over the grass plot and peer around, shading the light a little. We shall probably see a good number of worms busy crawling about, but most of them have their tails each in a hole in the ground. This is the burrow, which the worm rarely leaves; indeed he holds to it so fast by expanding the hinder-part of his body, and helped by the short bristles with which he is invisibly armed, that Darwin tells us he can seldom be dragged out of the ground without being torn in pieces. Worms are very fond of lying near to the top of the burrows in the morning, and of this plan the thrushes and blackbirds highly approve when they are in want of their breakfast. Worms are supposed to come near the surface for the sake of the warmth, and they often arrange a coating of leaves at the mouths of their burrows, so as to have a cosy couch to keep them from the cold dampness of the earth. Leaves are also used to close up the mouths of their burrows, and sometimes at night a rustling noise may be heard, caused by the worms dragging dry leaves into their holes. If they cannot manage to obtain leaves for this purpose, they will drag a little heap of stones together to protect the top of the burrows. Darwin tells us of a lady who was fond of watching the doings of the worms in her garden. One night

she took away all the little heaps from the mouths of the burrows, and the next night when she went out with a lantern she could see that the worms did not at all approve of her interference, as they were busy dragging back the stones, their tails meanwhile being firmly fixed in the burrows.

Worms make their burrows in two different ways; by pushing away the earth on all sides, and also by swallowing it, so as to make a passage. Later on we shall see how very important this second plan of theirs is, when we come to know of the work the worms do. The burrows are lined with a thin layer of fine earth given out by the worms; this hardens like cement, and when it is dry the hole fits the worm's body very closely. Then with the help of the tiny bristles which cover the body, a worm can go up and down very quickly indeed, and either backwards or forwards. This is more easily understood when we remember that the body of a worm is made up of a great many rings, each of which has a number of bristles. In the body of a large worm there will be between one and two hundred of these rings, which, as may be often noticed, can be stretched apart or kept close together. Their breathing is done through the skin, as they have no special lungs. They have no eyes either, but strangely enough they seem to be able to *feel* a very strong light. As to their food they eat many things, earth especially, of which they swallow immense quantities, taking out of it anything they can get. Fresh leaves and dead leaves and flowers they are also very fond of, tearing them into tiny pieces, moistening them, but only half digesting them. Then these fragments mix with the earth and give to the mould the dark brown colour we know so well.

After swallowing earth down below, whether for food or for making its burrow, a worm very soon comes to the top to empty its body. It tries to show itself as little as possible, and is very fond of the shelter of a stone under which it can put its little heap of earth, which thus changes place from underneath to the top. In England these little heaps never grow very big, but in the south of France, and in India, the "castings," as they are called, grow into quite tower-like masses, sometimes as much as three inches high. A little round passage runs through the middle of the tower, up which the worm travels to throw out more earth and so make the

heap higher. The largest castings are made on the poorest land, because when the earth is not rich the worms have to swallow much larger quantities of it to find enough food.

In this way the whole of the top mould gradually passes over and over again through the bodies of worms, they constantly bringing what is below up to the top; and though you may think this is a very slow way of ploughing, it is not so really, for in every acre of ground there are thousands of worms, and each worm during the year brings up about twenty ounces of earth, or as much as would make a fair-sized cake.

In a few years stones or any small objects left on pasture land become buried underneath the earth brought up by the worms; and more curious still, in this manner all sorts of interesting things such as coins, gold ornaments, stone tools, and even old floors have been quite buried by the work of worms, and only found again by accident. The whole of the upper bed of mould is constantly being shifted, so that everything too big for worms to swallow sinks underneath.

As Darwin says, "It may be doubted whether there are many other animals which have played so important a part in the history of the world."

And now I hope you have heard enough to make you feel much more interested than you were before in these little creatures, who really deserve our attention and interest for all their hard work.

ALTRUISM AS A FACTOR IN EDUCATION.

IN reading the able paper on "Home Life," by A. F. S. in the May number of the *Parents' Review*, I was much struck by that part of the article dealing with the effects of Charity in a household. It is a question on which I feel so strongly, that I thought perhaps a few remarks on the subject might interest some of the Parents for which this Magazine is mainly written.

Altruism is, or should be, one of the great factors of a child's education. I altogether fail to see why children should not be made to understand from their earliest years, that life, beautiful as it may appear on the surface to some, is a sad and weary affair to many with whom we come in contact. I know many children who are so carefully guarded and nurtured, that, till they exchange their parents' home for one of their own, they know practically nothing of all that is ugly and distasteful in life. Then their eyes are apt to be opened, and often with heart-breaking suddenness. Surely in this age of Altruism, and Philanthropic movements of all kinds, this must be radically wrong. A. F. S. says, in the above mentioned Article, that by employing lady nurses we miss "a personal sympathy with the lower classes," and that through the maids, the children "gain some insight into less favored lives than theirs." I myself doubt very much whether this really is the case. In these days, when to the children of many thinking parents every man is a "gentleman," and every woman is a "lady," they hardly connect our well-dressed and well-fed servants with the "poor." There is a more direct and practical way of bringing our children in contact with those who really need help.

To my mind, it is the duty of parents (and especially of a mother) to set their children an example in this matter. If an intelligent child sees its mother devote a certain portion of the week to the poor, it is a more rational lesson in Altruism than the largest batch of